

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1 - 73 (Cancelled)

74. (Original)A method for preparing microparticles, comprising:  
preparing an emulsion comprising an active agent and a biodegradable, biocompatible polymer dissolved in a solvent;  
combining the emulsion with a coacervating agent that is free from solvents for the polymer to form a combined phase; and  
extracting the solvent from the combined phase with a solvent blend of a hardening solvent and a washing solvent, to thereby form hardened microparticles.
75. (Original)The method of claim 74, further comprising after the extracting step:  
rinsing the microparticles with the hardening solvent.
76. (Original)The method of claim 74, wherein the hardening solvent is a liquid alkane.
77. (Original)The method of claim 74, wherein the washing solvent is an alcohol.
78. (Original)The method of claim 76, wherein the washing solvent is an alcohol.
79. (Original)The method of claim 74, wherein the hardening solvent is selected from the group consisting of heptane, hexane, cyclohexane, diethyl ether, petroleum ether, mineral oil, fatty acid esters, and caprylate triglyceride.
80. (Original)The method of claim 74, wherein the washing solvent is selected from the group consisting of ethanol and isopropanol.
81. (Original)The method of claim 74, wherein the hardening solvent is heptane and the washing solvent is ethanol.
82. (Original)The method of claim 74, wherein the solvent is a halogenated solvent.
83. (Original)The method of claim 74, wherein the coacervating agent is silicone oil.
84. (Original)The method of claim 75, wherein the hardening solvent is heptane.

85. (Original)The method of claim 81, further comprising after the extracting step:  
rinsing the microparticles with heptane.
86. (Original)The method of claim 74, further comprising after the extracting step:  
rinsing the microparticles with a second hardening solvent different from the hardening  
solvent.
87. (Original)Microparticles prepared by the method of claim 74.